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THE THIRD LIFE OF ITALY.

BY GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO.

ONE evening last March, seated in my place on the Extreme Right in the temporary hall already doomed to be pulled down, in the Parliament House on Montecitorio, I was present at one of the most violent scenes that have ever taken place in any legislative assembly. For many days before, the group of the Extreme Left had been engaged in defending, with admirable strength and persistency, the liberties granted by the Constitution against the attempt of the Government to restrict them. A member for Florence, one of those still left of the decrepit Florentine exclusive party, the *consorteria*, and a descendant of a family devoted to the House of Lorraine, had made a motion, in the name of the majority (a piece of ineffectual and ungrammatical prose), to the intent that the liberal traditions of our parliamentary discussions should be checked at one stroke. On the benches on my side of the house, I saw this red-haired, bony *homunculus*, livid with party rage, surrounded by a group of partisans, who were doing their best to imitate the different sounds that issue from pig-styes or a farmyard. On the opposite benches was a group of men resolutely determined to support their idea with all their power and every means at their command; inspired by an ardent faith, moved by sincere wrath, some of them endowed with real eloquence and powerful lungs, others with strong muscles and warm blood, all of them teeming with life and capable of showing their vitality by genuine courage and capacity for resistance. "So far off from me," I thought; "so different! And yet, they alone stand up here to support the cause of life in the midst of such weakness, such uncertainty, and such decay!"

The atmosphere had become charged with electricity. From time to time the uproar was interrupted by bursts of applause,

which broke in with a dry, hard sound like blows on flint. A powerful voice, like thunder, was heard repeating, over and over again, the same short phrase, full of threats, with the rhythm of a hammer beating on the anvil. Every face was inflamed with passion, behind a hedge of threatening fists. A breath of tragedy passed over those rebellious heads, awakening confused memories of turbulent assemblies on the eve of some great catastrophe.

I instinctively stood up, impelled by a feeling of disgust against those who were not able to raise an effective and meaning voice in opposition to that victorious energy, but merely an ignominious croaking. I crossed the hall and mounted to the highest bench of the opposite side, so as to observe the combatants better; and although I do not approve of their principles, I could not but admire their powerful efforts.

In the meantime, the members of the Government remained seated on the bench of Power, absolutely lifeless, with folded arms and eyes turned up to the ceiling, which was not falling. Even the old chairs had more life than they. It seemed as if even the furious ringing of the President's bell was unable to communicate the slightest vibration to their skulls as they sat stolidly just below. They remained stationary and inane, like wax figures in a museum.

At last, the bell broke. The President of the Chamber put on his hat, left his place, and the sitting was closed. Once more, the Extreme Left had won the day; had imposed its will upon the impotent majority.

The Deputies rushed from the hall, where the air had become unfit to breathe, charged with hatred as a cloud with lightning. A feverish agitation spread through the corridors. The echoes of the old Pontifical Palace were certainly alarmed at it all. One cry was heard above all the wrathful din: "To the Red Hall! To the Red Hall!" The leaders of the Extreme Left were summoning their disciplined forces to a secret meeting.

I had already decided what to do, and, passing through that feverish uproar, I felt in me that kind of icy clearness of mind which inspires men with calm courage. I knew very well what I was about on my way to the Red Hall. I saw quite clearly what was going to happen. The party from which I was separating myself so abruptly would become my bitter enemy; whilst the party to which I was betaking myself, without entering into its

ideas, but only into its spirit of revolt, would not be friendly to me. Without doubt, I should bring down bursts of abuse upon myself from the innumerable Bœotians who people this dear Kingdom. I should bring down a fresh outburst of wrath upon my unfortunate head, already tried by so many storms; I should be left standing alone, with my faith and my strength only.

Suddenly, I found myself in the hall where the opposition party had met. All rose when I entered, and applauded, showing in this way that they honored intellect, firm will, and mental energy. Some one even recalled the words spoken by one of my tragic personages: "It is not hunger, it is not hunger alone, that cries out everywhere and holds out its hands; but it is revolt against the intolerable falseness which pervades all the organs of our existence, which deforms, poisons, and threatens them with death. This falseness must be done away with before we can live, or even exist."

I spoke briefly and clearly—so clearly that it would have been impossible to misunderstand me. Those who wished to make believe that I had surrendered myself entirely to the extreme parties, and that I had become a renegade to the doctrine of individualism, and to the worship of heroes, which is the life of art and all my works, have but shown their utter dishonesty.

Not only have I retained all the ideas firmly rooted in me by nature, and strengthened by education, but I most decidedly reaffirmed them on that occasion.

I.

The feeling which moved me to join the meeting of my adversaries is in no way opposed to the doctrine which inspires my art, my writings. On the contrary, it arose rather from the profound sincerity of that natural instinct which always inclines me towards every powerful and efficacious expression of nature. Among all the attitudes of man, the one I love best is that of a man bending a bow. Among all the manly undertakings, that which strikes me the most is that of one intent on destroying the law created by others to put his own in its place. All my heroes profess the most pure, intellectual anarchy; and their one thought is but a continuous aspiring to obtain absolute control of themselves, and afterwards to show it in definite acts. Andrea Sperelli, Tullio Hermil, Giorgio Aurispa recognize their wretchedness in

their weakness of will, by which they are prevented from showing their real being; and they invoke in vain "an intercessor for life," as happiness is a thing that man must mould for himself, with his own hands, on his own anvil.

Claudio Cantelmo, that good Italian, who, during those days of struggle, was put up in opposition to me, especially by those who did not know him, has described in a few suitable words the efforts he made to reach the highest inner dignity. He regrets that the incapability of his caste does not allow him to head any civil undertaking; and, as he is not able to show himself as he would, he concentrates in his own spirit his own force of will, and creates an inner world of poetry. Now, poetry is action.

My last hero, Stelio Effrena, in "The Fire of Life," has a deep sense of this truth, when his conscience learns that, in the communion between his soul and the soul of the mass, an almost divine mystery has intervened, and that something grander and stronger has been added to his usual self. He repeats, with a still prouder faith, that which I said one day in a meeting of townsmen and agriculturists: "The word of the poet, communicated to the mass, is an act, like the exploit of a hero." And the doctrine which he follows and teaches is the doctrine of effort for effort's sake, the doctrine of continual struggle and conquest over the world. "I see everything changing in front of fire, like possessions in front of gold. One thing is constant: *my courage*. I do not sit down, except to stand up again." He knows that the ideal form of being does not develop otherwise than in profusion of life. At the extreme limit of his experience, through sorrow and sin, he will finally find the harmony of his soul, at peace with the Universe, completely revealed and understood, as the crowning of his indefatigable efforts. He will be, in the highest meaning of Leonardo da Vinci's words, a "*modello dello mondo*."

He, like his predecessor, in the face of the ridiculous figure which the Italian Parliament makes of itself, would not, by the logic of his ideas and the impulse of his instincts, take a resolution different to that which I took, and he would also certainly rejoice in hearing so many hoarse vociferations and so much harmless jabbering.

The great parliamentary lie is infecting the whole Italian life, like a cancerous sore on a sound body. The Parliament, in the representative system, ought to be a central organ of circula-

tion, like a living heart, so that it may receive all the vital elements and distribute them, converted into restorative power, flowing through all the members of the country, as far as the most remote extremity, with a constant rhythm. The Parliament ought to be the supreme seat of the conscience and strength of the nation; a fiery furnace, where great ideas are moulded for the making of the laws.

As it is, what are the great ideas, which circulate along those narrow benches, on which so many dose, or pass jokes to while away the weary time, or distil the poison of their miserable greed? By what men are these ideas represented? Who has the thought of Italy in his mind still pure? Who knows or divines the latent forces in the hereditary substance of the nation, the instincts of our race, the aspirations of our ancient blood? Where is the Leader that we could follow, capable of reconciling grand acts with grand conceptions, and able, by his impulse, to favor the economical development, the higher condition of life?

The most arduous problems relating to commerce, agriculture, instruction, the patrimony of our language and art, on which our fate hangs, on which our very existence depends, are not considered otherwise than as quite secondary matters, to be made use of in the ministerial and anti-ministerial jugglery of second rate ambitious lawyers. Who really studies these problems? Who throws any light upon them? Who raises them up, by his intellect and feeling, before the eyes of the people and transfigures them into beautiful ideals, so that they may be loved and followed?

Because of this, because of the necessity for revolt and the need of action, so as to vigorously and resolutely oppose the wrecking of Italy, in which a herd of brutes is engaged, I separated myself from a political party, which has neither ideas nor courage.

Mine is an attempt of intellectual revolt against the tyranny of barbarians. It is the beginning of an undertaking which, with little power, perhaps, but most certainly with great faith, I should like to lead on to its close, if the example of a bold effort be of use for the purpose of saving anything beautiful or idealistic from the turbid wave of vulgarity, which, alas! is swamping the whole privileged land where Leonardo created his superb Madonnas and Michelangelo his indomitable heroes.

The time has gone by for dreaming solitary dreams in the shade of the laurel and the myrtle. Men of intellect ought to col-

lect all their energy and support the cause of Intelligence against Barbarity, if the truest instinct of life is not benumbed in them. If they wish to live, they must constantly keep themselves in the front and fight against destruction, violation and contagion. If they wish to live, they must put an end to the present discord between thought and action; they must conquer the place, which is theirs of right, at the summit of the social edifice. After the warrior, the priest and the commercial man, the thinker must now come! The superiority of the caste, in which the conditions of the highest mental existence are embodied, must be recognized after the power of arms, of religion, of wealth.

It is now time that we should acknowledge the civil dignity of literature in its highest sense, and the true place which is due to the great worker in words, who is no longer to be considered as the delicate ornament of a laborious civilization, but as the first of the citizens, as the highest example of conscience ever produced by a nation, as the witness, interpreter and messenger of his time.

Why, then, should we perpetuate this dissension between thought and action? Why should we continue to ignore the high civil office of literature, exclude from public life the men of intellect and study, and deny one of the most noble of Italian traditions?

I was lately reading again, in that most excellent book by Vespasiano da Bisticci, the lives of the Florentine statesmen of old, from Cosimo dei Medici to Palla di Noferi Strozzi, from Pandolfo Pandolfini to Donato Acciaiuoli, from Bernardo Giugni to Piero dei Pazzi. Each life begins with this constant praise: "He had an extensive knowledge of Latin. * * * He was very fond of literature and greatly honored it. * * * His love of letters was his greatest accomplishment." What could the ancient beadle of the Republic say if he were charged to write the biographies of our men?

During the late elections, in a borough of Southern Italy, a friend of mine was reproved by his opponent for having made speeches in good Italian, rather than in the low lawyer's jargon so general among the Majority, and which is still more maimed and halting than the ordinary monastic Italian of the Middle Ages!

But the time has come for the foolish prejudice to be done

away with, and for the unity of the human soul to be reconstituted. The spiritual powers cannot be separated; they are like the branches of one trunk, nourished by the same sap. Poetry, science, politics are not divergent, but convergent; the human soul and the human ideal are expressed through the same rhythm in a poem, in a law, in an action. Does not the highest Italian example that ever yet appeared on earth, typical of our race, Dante Alighieri, include everything in his sovereign unity? And shall we not always find in him the necessary guide, whom our gentle Latin race must follow to regain its old power? Will he not assist us in preparing the advent of the men for whom we are waiting, capable of uniting in one single ideal great actions and great thoughts.

And yet, in Italy, men destitute of all culture and mental capacity, who preside over Government and public affairs, are called *practical men*.

"In Italy there are no practical men," was said by Gino Capponi, a Florentine, whom none could suspect of trading with the lowest class of artisans, the *Ciompi* of old, although he was a descendant of that other Gino, who wrote the *Commentario sul Tumulto*; "there are no practical men, because practical men do not know how to be anything but mechanics or accountants."

And our politics are the work of insignificant mechanics and humble accountants, without ideas and without faith, and are but a perpetual conflict of vulgar interests and fierce greed. All zeal diverges and turns only upon itself, and for itself, without any accord with the other forces and functions of the State. The Italians, now that they have finally succeeded in crowning with unity the aspirations that had inflamed the purest spirits through the course of centuries, and in realizing the sublime dream of Dante and of Machiavelli, now offer us a singular instance of political dissension, of general-discontent, of disaffection for their native land, of aversion for the State, of weariness such as it would be difficult to find in the history of any other nation.

Why should we not have the courage to investigate and demonstrate the evil?

That which is taking place in Italy at the present day, has no counterpart. There have been, in certain historical periods, instances of weariness and political hatred, but always limited to a few special classes; now however, here in Italy the moral dis-

content is spread everywhere, over every class, in every place. A constant acrimony, a weary vexation, an unspeakable sadness darken and sterilize the entire life of the nation. The delightful light-heartedness of the Italian people, which withstood the test of political divisions and the stranger's rule, is all gone. The grand, heroic flame, which stirred the people together with the same ardor, is extinguished; and the Italians of to-day—after forty years of political unity—are intent on nothing else than exercising secret or open hostilities one against the other, or in moving their forces in contrary directions, even when they are allied. The national conscience, which had sprung up in the fire of the great revolution, in which all differences seemed as if they were fused like different metals in one furnace, has little by little, through bad systems of government, gone on growing weaker and weaker; and to-day it seems almost entirely to have gone astray. And this falling away, the culminating point of misery and danger, is contemporary with the violent exaltation which strengthens the will and the instincts of the most powerful races in the world.

II.

Let us look at Germany, our ally, that succeeded in reaching the height of its unity about one year after the constitution of the Royal power in Rome. Germany furnishes us with an admirable example of a national consciousness, newly aroused in the very depth of a land which had for a long time remained divided and inert. In less than thirty years, its collective life has grown and developed in a marvelous manner. A constant breath of new life blows over its plains furrowed by wide navigable rivers; and this new life stimulates it constantly and effectually to commercial efforts that are unsurpassed by those of any other country in Europe. Germany is bent on providing itself from day to day with more rapid and efficacious weapons for conquest, on opening out new paths for commerce, and on preparing, by means of repeated small victories, the supreme victory of the future. Every town has become a burning furnace, a centre of vast industries; the men from the fields have been attracted by the precise and shining machines; the chimneys of the factories, by thousands, are belching forth smoke over the pointed roofs of the houses, and the stones of the cathedrals are blackened with

soot. The movement in Germany's ports has increased so rapidly, that in a short time it will equal that of the great ports of England. "Germany's future is on the sea," are the prophetic words of the German Emperor. And the Empire fosters this, its destiny, by an output of incessant work. In less than thirty years, her merchant service has approximated in number and capacity to that of Great Britain. At the close of the war, it numbered only five hundred ships; to-day it can count about four thousand. All the arsenals are filled with workmen preparing to launch new keels into the sea; the art of shipbuilding has become a noble art. The German dockyards are filled with work from all parts of the world; millions of tons are launched every year, and to-day the Imperial flag is flying from the masts of well-built ships floating in every sea upon the globe. The men at the head of the government are ever on the lookout for new and wider openings for the immense industrial production—in Africa, in North and South America, in the Asiatic continent, in the young Australian States. The new industrial activity has been marvelously grafted on to the old Prussian military traditions; and the Germans have felt their instinct of dominion strengthened in the harmony and success of labor, adapting themselves to the weapons employed in another kind of war. France is again vanquished; and England, threatened, is anxiously searching for means wherewith to defend herself.

Here, also, we are looking on at an almost frenzied exaltation of the national spirit, at an extraordinary impetus of the strength of a race.

England, hampered by the United States and by Germany on the very spots where her commercial supremacy seemed confirmed through the course of centuries, now seems about to take her revenge by increasing in an extraordinary way her colonial possessions, by indefinitely spreading her Empire, by putting into effect the ambitious and warlike conception, which Sir Charles Dilke was the first to lay before the British pride. All the living forces of the Nation, elated by a poet and led by a statesman, tend towards the image of a "Greater Britain." The race of the five meals, as Rudyard Kipling calls the English, is opening its jaws to devour the universe.

The dream of this rapacious, insular soul is, in its vastness, to be compared only to the record of the undertaking accomplished

by the Romans *in Orbe*. Out of the blood spilt in the Transvaal tragedy a violent fermentation arises, which maddens with glory. "*Tu regere imperio populos.*" Each subject of the Queen has the image of the Oceanic Empire floating before his eyes, that *Oceana*, which in Froude's vaticinating book emerges from the depth of the seas and throws its immeasurable shadow over the depressed nations. No oracle was received by the pugnacious Hellenes with equal faith. Never was a sacred oath taken by neophytes with greater fervor. The man from Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain, was able to say in one of his speeches to the Londoners, after his return from a tour of apostolic preaching through the United Kingdom, when relating his enthusiastic reception:

"I was perhaps worthy of such a reception, for two merits which I feel I may here state: my faith in the Empire and my faith in the Race. Yes, I believe in our Race, which is the greatest among all the ruling races of the world; I believe in the Anglo-Saxon blood, proud, tenacious, trusting, resolute, unchangeable in every climate and every condition, predestined to be, without fail, the overpowering force in the future history of human civilization. * * * I believe in the future of this Empire, vast as the world; of which no Englishman can speak without a thrill of enthusiasm."

And the results are: West Africa invaded, Uganda occupied, the Soudan subjugated, the Niger and Lake Tanganyika daringly navigated; in Asia, to the wide territory which stretches between Afghanistan and Siam, the Chinese shore has been added, where British energy is restlessly at work. The divided and far-off dominions will be united; the gaps will be filled; all the lands where the mother tongue is spoken will be bound by a new link; from India to Canada, from Australia to Egypt, from the United States to the Cape, a sole will and a sole aspiration shall animate the federated peoples. The "Greater Britain" will be permanently constituted; the face of the earth will be changed, and a new Era will commence in the history of mankind. As in former times the Roman peace shone over the Mediterranean, so in the same way the *Pax Britannica* will shine over all the Oceans.

If, notwithstanding everything, this grand idea—in which all the instincts of the race, even the lowest, are transfigured into a yearning towards a higher life—is not to be realized, it has nevertheless so much active energy that its decisive influence in the balance of the world cannot be denied. What they dwindle to, in comparison to this mass of will and interests, what do they be-

come, all those little timorous combinations, which hide themselves in the desiccated folds of the brain of a marquis, to whom the making of the foreign history of the Kingdom of Italy is entrusted! The great drama enacted on the stage of the world was never so grand, or so thrilling. At the present moment we have the demonstration that, as regards nations, we must not expect either great misfortunes or great happiness to result from different forms of government, but from the power of dominating the forces of nature.

This laborious travailing of the human species is nothing else than the fever of youth; it is nothing but the expression of a longing for a higher life. In the innumerable factories that rise from the soil, in the mines which sink down into the earth, in the wagons which run along the iron rails, in the ships that sail over the seas and rivers, and in all the instruments of labor and of wealth, marvellous beauties are being prepared. A new force will spring from force: *Vis ex vi*. In art, in commerce, and in politics, matter and chance are nevertheless tyrants. The reign of the human soul has not yet begun. "When material operating on material can take the place of men's arms, then the soul will begin to see a glimpse of the dawn of its liberty." This was said, long since, by an Italian, who had the power of divination. The all powerful machines, which also answer to the exact rhythm, announce an unknown poetry, an unspeakable joy, an unhopd for liberation.

The pure idea, towards which we inevitably tend, cannot manifest itself except in exuberance of life. And life was never more fervid or more fruitful than now. What historical fact can be compared in grandeur to the revival in Asia, to this sudden rejuvenation, which gives new life to sacred Asia, the land of sublime and entire unity? A sealed Empire, the Celestial Empire, awakened by contact of Western civilization, agitated by rebellion, shaken by war, is about to throw on the labor market the alarming mass of its yellow race. Another stationary Empire, that of the Rising Sun, is giving the unheard of example of a transformation which seems rather a marvellous creation. And here the strength and pride of race triumph and devour without ever being satiated. Those who conquered the Celestials, and are now fighting by the side of the Europeans, aim at conquest. They are not thinking only of the dominion of Asia, but of the whole Pacific! Their

greed includes the Philippines, Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies and Hawaii. The boastful words of Okuma are well known: "Europe is decrepit; we will gather up her inheritance!"

And North America, with its industrial progress already so vast and imposing, but still far from having reached its highest grade, with its grand rivers, immense valleys and countless mineral wealth, presents a picture of productive energy which cannot be compared to anything yet heard of in history. And in Australia, the virgin strength of peoples hardly adolescent is now in effervescence.

Here and there in Europe, also, the race struggle continues unsolved and furnishes ever varying elements of association and of separation. In Austria-Hungary, the perpetual discord between the German, Magyar and Slavonian forces will shortly be followed by dissolution. On the banks of the Danube, at Vienna, Prague, Buda-Pesth, Agram, in our beloved Trieste, the principle of nationality acts like implacable leaven. And the commercial struggle, the fight for wealth, carries with it danger of most terrible conflagrations everywhere. The smoke of the factories suggests the vapors of lyddite; the glistening of the well polished machinery recalls the flash of steel weapons. Never were the rights of the weaker races more cruelly violated by tyranny and avidity. The hoarse cry of War is heard over and above the assiduous din of the factories. The whole world is bent like a bow; and the words of Heraclitus the Dark never had more meaning than to-day: "The bow is called *Bios*, and its work is death."

What part, what destiny will Italy have in this formidable struggle? Will she again find her spirit? Will she shake and arouse to their very depths the dormant forces which might save her? Does she realize, in this moment of painful awakening, the necessity for sweeping away the mass of vile imbecility which is keeping her down?

III.

Let us consider awhile our statesmen, beginning with the seniors, those called "liberators," those who *made* Italy.

He was a courageous speaker of truth, the man who dared to say that we ought to immolate these men called liberators, and then throw them into the foundations of the third Rome; and, according to the ancient custom of burial, lay at their feet, by

their sides, and in their hands, the things they loved and were familiar with; and then detach and drag down from the summits of the mountains the largest blocks of granite, so as to eternally close the venerable sepulchres. In this way, we should have gazed upon them, with our souls' eyes, resplendent forever in the flaming vortex of revolution; and we should have inferred, from the far off beauty of their heroic exploits, an heroic reason for their apotheosis.

But they in fact came out of the flames blinded. They were not equal to the contemplation of the face of their country recomposed, and they could not recognize the thought which illuminated the divine turreted brow, cleansed from the gun powder, from the blood and sweat. Every generous pulsation stilled in their veins, they appeared before us in all the abjectness of their senile decay; but their hands, although feeble and vacillating, still had sufficient strength to manacle and soil those sacred things which ought to have been placed upon the altars and honoured by solemn worship.

Let us now consider the new men, who have come from the law-courts, or some remunerative office, real mechanics and accountants, as Gino Capponi would call them—arid manipulators of taxes and weavers of intrigues.

Who among these, up till now, has shown that he understands the idea towards which our race has been led by its destiny, through the vicissitudes of centuries? Not one of them was ever a man who could represent the national genius; not one of them had ever considered with a clear eye the *tout ensemble* of the life lived by the race up to the present moment so as to gather from it an old truth to place before us as a guide to new laws?

What have they done with beauty, art, learning, flourishing industries, all the rich treasures, all the most noble adornments of the Italian spirit, those men who have taken part in the government during the last thirty years? By what means have they defended, by what means have they endeavored to increase, the patrimony of the grand Latin culture, which innumerable generations of artists and learned men have handed down to us, as a faithful witness of the privilege by which nature has distinguished our blood? With what undertakings have they favoured those superior apparitions of moral energy which have lit up the tumultuous firmament of our history, like flashes of lightning? Alas!

everything has been debased or deformed beyond remedy in their incapable hands!

Who amongst them has shown that he recognized the ancient, active virtues of the Italians, the variety of their work, the wisdom of their institutions, the prevalence of great men, the fervor of civil passions, the impression of *man* in everything—the utensil made a living being, the stones collected together by a decree of glory, the public power expressed by grand buildings, the city sculptured like an idol, all that splendid, dissonant accord which constituted the free State?

Every one prepares the blacking for his own shoes in his own way, and does not notice, or pretends not to notice, that the blacking does not hide the numberless cracks in the leather.

No men in government have ever in fact given more proofs of gross incapability, or of great ignorance of the most elementary laws which rule the development of the natural life. No modern constitution is so terribly mistaken with regard to the people on whom it has been imposed as ours; and its errors have never been more blindly and obstinately exaggerated by means of its administration, which seems to be expressly fitted to increase these same errors. There are other new States in Europe; but not one has, like ours, done away with all traditions of the past, and not one consequently has accumulated so many pernicious incongruities in its method of government. Political greatness does not exist except for that people which shows that it understands its new destiny, and is united in employing all its strength to carry it out, remaining tenacious, however, in preserving the greater number of its traditions, and decided in confirming and building up; not in contraposition, but in addition, to that which existed.

The work of our men in power has been nearly always destructive. They not only did not understand how art and culture ought to crown the new edifice in a country called Italy; but they took no account, in the new constitution, of the tendencies shown in our history for centuries.

The Italian political constitution, in fact, framed on the French model, has assumed for its principal task that of destroying all the local powers, which once upon a time were the health and glory of Italy. The municipal government having been abolished, which in Lombardy had succeeded in protecting that region from German oppression, which had succeeded in Florence in

stirring up the Roman blood against the remains of German tradition and race, the State has thought well, by means of implacable assimilations, to deprive the Italian regions of their traditional individuality, and to smother their original energy under restrictions of the meanest uniformity.

The local governments discouraged or destroyed in this way, the local life—in which the richest elements of social prosperity are collected together—weakened and corrupted, our country has arrived at the point of considering executive power as a common enemy, the elective power as a blind, ignorant, anonymous and irresponsible power, and, finally, the Senate—which has neither the historical origin of the English House of Lords, nor the democratic origin of the Belgian Senate—as an useless organ, an asylum for invalids, a kind of comfortable home for old age.

The immediate consequence of this discredit of the State is more bitterness in the struggles of parties and classes. Each faction becomes more exacting, and in each party—even in that which is called conservative, and, perhaps, more markedly in that party—a spirit of revolt is in fermentation. All the political energies in Italy spread from the centre; that is to say, they violently diverge from the central power.

All this moral trouble—discontent, weariness of the government and laws—produces a kind of half hidden anarchy, which pervades the country and upsets all discipline; so that the Italian of to-day regards every recourse to public action as a risk and an evil. The system of taxation was born and has grown up in confusion, not unlike the weeds and rank grass which invade and choke up a deserted field. There is no rational principle to regulate it, no order to render it logical and just, no elasticity to adapt it to the infinite gradations of wealth and labor. Its only office is to oppress and suffocate; and it seems to have been drawn up purposely to oppose, with a series of hostile impediments, all industrial movement; whilst the waste in public works is so foolish, that we have seen colossal fortunes made by jobbers in every city in Italy. And this waste is not only a cause of financial trouble, but it is also a cause of moral acrimony. “The bank has become a political organ, and politics are now the bank,” some one justly said.

Not even the magistracy is free from this confusion. And there is no more serious symptom of decay in a State than this;

because, according to the profound consideration of our historian Guicciardini, "the mass appreciate justice more than liberty, and resent far more an offence to the former than to the latter."

Let us also consider that other most important office in a country like Italy, which is called the Ministry for Public Instruction, established for the purpose of preserving our patrimony of art, and promoting culture.

To gain an idea of the disregard in which this high office is held by the men at the head of the government, it will suffice to pass in review the worthless men who have been exalted to that place, with the exception of some rare and honest men of talent, who did not succeed, however, in destroying the bureaucratic conspiracy. We need only recall the fact that, not long since, an old professional politician, who up to that day had never shown any other qualities than those of a police officer, and who had but just left his office as a Commissary in Sicily, was installed as head of this Ministry, which directs the order of studies and watches over the national treasure of fine arts. It is but natural that this kind of man should be more interested in the intrigues of the small parliamentary groups, than in reorganizing a museum or a library, and that a "combination" for propping up a Ministry in danger should be far more urgent for him than the repairing of some wonderful basilica in ruins. Does not the traveller in Italy meet signs of neglect and destruction at every step? Who has not looked with sorrow and wrath upon the remains of master-works, destroyed by the ravages of time and modern barbarians? Who has not seen noble monuments of beauty, around which a civilized people ought to institute perpetual worship, perish through neglect? It is easier to obtain from the government a knightly order for a thief, than a small sum of money to strengthen an apsis which threatens to fall.

Nor, indeed, is there much cause for rejoicing, when the State undertakes to put in order, arrange or repair anything. It is well known that for several years an execrable restorer—whose name ought to be condemned to eternal infamy—went from one to the other of the principal museums and churches of Italy, repainting pictures and frescoes with a kind of insatiable fury. There is not a single figure by Carpaccio in the "History of Saint Ursula" in the *Accademia* in Venice that has not been dishonored by that infamous brush. Nearly all the paintings by Giotto in Assisi have

suffered the same outrage. And one of Titian's grandest masterpieces, the "Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence," in the Jesuits' Church at Venice, has been irreparably destroyed by the pitch of this vile smudger.

Well, then, this same smudger, instead of being burnt alive on the gridiron like Saint Lawrence, is quietly spending his old age, blessed with a sinecure, troubled with one regret only, and that is that he is not able to repaint the whole world.

Legion is the name of similar restorers, and to the deformity of these restorations we must add the mania for transforming every living work of art into an object for a museum, into a dead thing, carrying it away from the place where it was born, removing it from the very conditions of its ideal existence, causing it, I should almost say, to fade and lose its color, like a tree transplanted, like a flower cut from the stalk. Alas! Art is but an inert memory. When, then, will the rhythm of Art and the pulse of Life beat together in the same pulsation?

Let us consider, moreover, the uncertainty and the stupidity which have reigned supreme so long in the organization of the schools. This organization is quite illogical and out of keeping with the necessity of the situation. Tradition is ignored; but there is no vitality to take its place. There are men born in poverty, sons of peasants, of workmen, of clerks, laborious and retiring men, who have acquired education through hard work and self-sacrifice. They ask for admission into so-called "Society" on the strength of their University degrees; they are not rebellious, seditious; on the contrary, they are humble, well behaved and quite disposed to become good middle-class citizens; and yet they end in the clutches of want, in the horrors of starvation. They believed that education would have provided them with bread; but education only allows them to die of hunger.

Here we have a new form of misery, and consequently of rebellion, far more painful and far more terrible than any other form. The rancor of those who are led through education to naught else than to learn, with the mortal uncertainty of the morrow, the humiliation which dishonors and the servitude which abases, originates first of all in the schools, and then is confirmed in the liberal professions. They can but swell the number of those workmen who are moved by a spirit of asserting by violence their right to live.

But, if we pass from domestic to foreign politics, a still more miserable picture presents itself. Always hesitating, sometimes greedy, then timid, fluctuating between petulance and humility, scorned in every small or important event, they pass through a succession of sterile desires and sad renunciations, and appear to be forced to keep up a perpetual jig like those matrons of old whom Nero obliged to jump about in the circus. What part has Italy ever played in the Mediterranean, of which she is historically, geographically and ethnographically the Queen? In a few words, she has allowed every hope to be taken from her of extending her dominion over that little strip of shore on which she might still have cast her eyes from afar. Tunis, Cyprus, Egypt, Crete are fading away on the horizon. An attempt is being made in Malta to tear up the last of Italian sentiment by suppressing the glorious language which once was spread all over the East. I myself have heard a statesman speak of the possibility of a secessionist movement in Sicily, and of an English occupation. Just think of this! And is there not, now and then, talk of design which France is said to entertain with regard to Sardinia?

This shows to what a low level political conscience has fallen in those who direct the destinies of a country in which the science of the Statesman flourished; in which the art of government was brought to such marvellous perfection—an art not founded, however, on false scholastic methods and puerile illusions, but on living realities, on facts, on experience, on that acute study of men and institutions, with their analogies and resemblances, in which the Florentine ambassadors and diplomats appeared unrivalled, both during the Republic, as well as when on the fall of communal liberty the new principality was constituted, and, in contradistinction to the foreign yoke, the grand vision of Machiavelli shone out over the world.

On the other hand the fair fame of Italy in the face of the world is not entrusted to a powerful and efficient instrument or weapon of offence such as her Navy ought necessarily to be. I said "weapon of offence," when I ought to have said *sine qua non* of existence; as the country's whole being draws life from the sea, and cannot live except by breathing the sea's salt air.

I trust I may be allowed to take some credit for the courageous campaign I conducted some years since as to the state of our Navy, when a disagreement arose between Signor Brin, then Minister

of Marine, and Admiral Saint Bon in reference to the question of increasing the number of the ships's crews.

This question of the manning of the ships, and many others similar, such as that of the arsenals, of the torpedo-boats, discipline, enlistment and promotion—about which I told some unpleasant truths—are all very serious and pressing at the present moment; and even now naval men are placed in command who have not the courage to cut away the ulcerous sore without fear or pity.

The present Minister of Marine is known as the “seller of ships.” It was he who allowed the *Garibaldi* to be sold to the Argentine Republic. It was he who sold to Spain that other ship, which under the name of *Cristobal Colon* ended miserably with her sides smashed in on the rocks of Santiago.

But who does not remember with what anxious attention Italy followed the new life given to her Navy, at the time of the great Admiral, after the miserable inefficiency into which her fleet had fallen, more especially under the Ministry of Guglielmo Acton? One after another those marvellous ships were launched, which seemed the most wonderful pieces of construction ever devised by human genius, and the most terrible and rapid instruments in existence for attack and defence. It seemed as if Italy brought them forth after painful labor, launched them upon the crest of a huge wave of love, and gazed upon them as beloved daughters, nourished by her best blood, and animated by the most glowing emotions. The enthusiasm, the greetings, and the benedictions which accompanied the successful launching of a new ship resounded from one end of the peninsula to the other in one immense echo. Not only along the sea-coast at Venice, Genoa, Spezia, Naples, Leghorn, where historical tradition was more alive, and the new energy strongest; but also in the inland provinces, in mountainous districts along the whole length of the Apennines, every heart was beating with anxiety, every one followed with the warmest good wishes and with joy the last iron daughter that Mother Italy was taking to the baptism of the sea.

What names they bore! *Italia, Lepanto, Dandolo, Duilio, Ruggero di Lauria, Morosini, Roma*. The figure of winged Hope was standing for us at the prow of each ship, and at the top of each mast the symbol of Victory was shining. Where is the Italian that did not then, in those moments of generous impulse,

feel a thrill of pride on hearing names laden with such grand recollections, such solemn omens, such great promises?

The love of the sea and of naval glory is still alive in Italy, deep and unchangeable, as in the days of the Republics. It is a grand and beautiful inheritance which is handed down from century to century, and cherished in the hearts of the Italians. No other aspiration is more general and truly national. And the national flag will never appear so beautiful, so free, so victorious in the eyes of the people, as when it waves over a powerful new man-of-war; "magnetic," in the words of Walt Whitman, "as the glance of a woman."

Italy—we must never tire of repeating it—will either be a great power on the sea, or nothing; and not merely a great naval power with warships, but with a number of merchant vessels, as in the grand old days of her maritime republics; as it is at sea that the supreme destinies of nations are to be decided. And the fibre of the Italian sailor is in truth so strong and pliant, that he can stand comparison all the world over, for his singular vigor of body and of mind.

As Italy is an essentially maritime nation, so excellent sailors are to be obtained from inland districts. The inspiring breath of the sea reaches as far even as the sides of the Alps and spreads along the whole length of the Apennines. Every Italian is a sailor because all feel that eternal greatness is on the sea.

Our conscription for the sea ought to be extended. We ought to levy men not only from the sea coasts, but from the whole of the peninsula. The present number of officers and sailors would not suffice to equip all our ships in time of war, even with reduced ship's companies. And most serious harm arises from our system of recruiting young men destined for the naval career, as well as from the system of promotion; which is so illogical and unjust that it appears specially designed to prevent good and capable officers from rising. The General Staff, too, is still a turbid mixture of mutually repulsive elements, at the bottom of which still seethe the germs of old evils—unchecked ambitions, personal and local jealousies, favoritism, ignorance and servility.

The only real way of serving the navy would be for a man to come forward and courageously effect the necessary reforms; and, by selecting the best elements and cleansing the whole body, change a motley crew, restless and discontented, into an excellent

nucleus of men, bound together by the heroic bond of duty, experienced in sea-faring ways, prepared for good or bad luck in war, consecrated to glory or to death; free, loyal, staunch brothers in the name of Italy.

But what undertaking, with any life in it, can ever be brought to a conclusion so long as this kind of madness continues, which drives the State to continually oppose those historical laws which our race must obey if it would recover its original position?

The careless neglect, for example, which the State shows in face of the great agrarian problem, which is of the same vital importance as the maritime, is incredible. The so-called group of the Agrarians, in the Italian Parliament, is small and feeble. In the "Reports on the Inquiry into the Agricultural State of the Country," we read: "Our country, at the time at which it was organized into one State, was, as regards agriculture, a *terra incognita*; and still is so, more or less." Notwithstanding which, the traditions of this most noble of man's works, agriculture, in Italy, are splendid.

In addressing the people of Florence during the recent electoral contest, I said:

"You, Florentines, the most ancient authors of that agrarian compact, which is one of the most important monuments of Italian civil wisdom; you, who were the first, at the time of your Republic, to forestall by five centuries the laws of the French Assembly, in declaring Liberty sacred, inalienable, the will of God, necessary for the prosperity of the people; you, who were the first to free the peasant from bondage, and to free from fetters and oppression agricultural work and the noble strength of the man who drives the plow and sows the seed; you, Florentines, who were the first—when the serfs were groaning on the sod in all other parts of Europe and were considered on the same level as the beasts—to raise the wielders of the scythe and pitchfork to the dignity of associates, calling them to share the joys of life with the citizens; you must to-day repeat the example you then gave. Raise to the honor of a seat in Parliament one of your wise and honest agriculturists, rather than one of those chattering lawyers. Give a voice to the soil, give many voices to the soil! In the midst of this general decay is not the peasant—strong, rough, sober, persevering, healthy—the best man amongst you? As he is the best, ought he not to have his part in public affairs?"

Italy, I again say, ought to be a great naval and agricultural power. There is a resemblance between the spur of the prow and the iron of the plough. That vision of the poet was just, in which the symbol of our native land appeared, like that ancient, insular victory, on the prow of a ship having the form of a ploughshare.

IV.

An unforeseen and terrible event has come upon us, to sweep away in an impetuous wave of grief and indignation all these miseries and all these failings. The blood of Humbert I. has fallen like a sacred leaven on the Italian soul, to awaken a sudden fervor of noble aspirations and good will. An heroic spirit has arisen from the dead body of that King, who had witnessed with such grave sadness the decline of every ideal in that third Rome, which ought to have represented before the world the indomitable love of the Latin race for the Latin soil, and ought to have sent forth from its heights rays of the marvellous light of a new life.

That resigned and veiled melancholy, superimposed on a feeling of invincible fatalism, gives a character of most noble gentleness to the late royal figure. As he was not able to exercise strength, he exercised kindness. It has been said that no other king of our times had, like Humbert, learnt to look suffering and death in the face; that no other king had felt pity and sympathy for human sufferings more deeply than he. This is true; and this is the grandest and purest of his titles to glory. And this is why—treacherously struck down by a vile coward's hand, in the midst of his people, among whom he had gone unarmed and alone—he was able to die with such serenity of soul, and with the simple and profound words of ancient wisdom on his lips, "*Non è niente!*"

All his surroundings were tragic, on that night of terror, from the roar of the crowd to the rolling thunder of the storm. Everything was tragic, as on the battlefield of Villafranca, as in the inundations in the Venetian provinces; as in the midst of the cholera stricken people in Naples and Busca, as among the ruins of Casamicciola; and he alone was calm in his lucid melancholy, and could die saying, "*It is nothing!*"

But out of his dead body—carried down through the peninsula, along the Apennines, along the sea, as far as Rome, on a memorable wakeful night—an heroic spirit has arisen which seems to be stirring the national conscience. And now, the aspirations and the wills of those fervid men, who would all so willingly join the search after the last effigy of beautiful Italy, all converge in his heir, in the young Victor Emanuel III.

Are these thrills of feeling a sure sign of a reawakening?

And does the new King belong to the race of those heroes who point out a goal for the energy of their people, and are equal to leading them up to it? We must hope in youth, and, like the Athenians on the great day of Mycale, take as our pass-word "*Hebe*," the goddess of youth.

It is in fact a matter of bending the great bow of Ulysses. The greatest and most dangerous problems—the Roman problem, the Southern problem, the naval problem, the agricultural problem—are all there and waiting to be solved.

The Roman problem, which concerns the relations between Church and State, has just lately, owing to the Vatican *intransigenza*, been violently flaunted before the eyes of the government, which has, up till now, always avoided facing it, pretending to ignore it, whilst Italy finds herself in the painful and most singular condition of supporting, within her domain, two political organizations, different from one another, opposed to one another, and moved by essentially contrary tendencies.

The Roman Pontificate is by origin and tradition a political organization. The Church in Italy must be considered as a vast and most powerful political association, hostile to the State; and it would be a childish error to seek the solution of the present dissension in Camillo Cavour's illusory formula, "The free Church in the free State." As liberty cannot repair the wrongs which the Church affirms that it has received at the hands of the State, it cannot remedy the harm which its enmity has already done, or that which it is slowly and surely preparing. As formal religion can be a most efficacious, conservative power when it works in harmony with the constitution, so is it a cause of separation and ruin when at war with the constitution. Ruggero Bonghi depicted this evil under the image of a cancer; it seems to me, however, that it would be expedient not to heal it by extirpation.

In the stating, as in the solving, of the problem, we must not neglect to consider the historical origin of the Pontificate—Roman by birth, with a Roman life behind it, and being a transformation of that political energy out of which the grandeur of ancient Rome arose. The early Christians used to represent Christ with the laticlave; Gregory the Great is called the "Consul of God" in the epitaph composed by Petrus Oldradius. The statue of St. Peter, which is venerated in the Vatican Basilica, is moulded out of a statue of Jupiter Capitolinus, which Leo the Great ordered

to be recast in thanksgiving for the liberation of Rome from the fury of Attila. What I wish to signify by these figures is that the natural and proper seat for the Pontiff is the *Urbs aeterna*, in the same way as it is the proper seat of the King of Italy; and the problem must always be put in these terms; the key of which is—according to my way of thinking—in the hands of the lower Italian clergy.

Those who believe that we ought, for the time being, to go on as well as we can, and those who dream of Avignon, and those who trust in the “irreligion of the future,” make an exhibition of that stupid empiricism which has brought us to our present state of decay.

From this decay we must rise again in the great name of Rome.
Aurea Roma iterum renovata renascitur orbi.

It is not true that we must die, and that the whole land is but an immense morass, where the more efforts one makes to get out, the more one sinks into it. The living body of the nation is laboring in torment, as from a hidden inflammation, out of which some great fever is about to rise. Here and there are true and strong men, who work out their high purposes according to the moral needs of the times in which they live, whose actions develop themselves in subordination to an idea born in them “from contact with the earth,” intent on surrounding their every moment with true harmony, and on attracting discordant movements opposed to them into that harmonious circle. And, from time to time, new aspirations are manifest in the mass of the nation itself towards simplicity and beauty; signs of a tormenting thirst, which the disgraceful drinks offered by those who make a pretence of ministering to it are not able to satisfy.

Have we not just lately seen the people of Italy stirred with noble feeling, at the sight of the wild and grand figure of one of her great painters stretched out in the eternity of death and glory? When Giovanni Segantini, the solitary king of the mountain, breathed his last on the Alps, sorrow, surprise and their dreams liberated the soul of the country, for one day at least, from the customary narrowness; and, in the short truce which bestowed the grace of poetry on it, Italy appeared to have found again in herself the sign of some of her previous aptitude, and to recognize her right to an ancient inheritance of which she had been despoiled. Perhaps she experienced the anxiety of one about

to repossess a lost fortune. The great value of an example was brought down along the mountain side, in the midst of the storm, together with that grand dead body. Some of us were filled with love for solitude, and determined to lead a more simple life, and to engage in manly work. Some of us thought that there was everything to hope for and expect, if a race believed to be decrepit, if a nation believed to be exhausted and consumed, had been able to produce a specimen of humanity of such frank strength and simple ingenuity. "There is, then," thought some, "there is, then, an inexhaustible fund of creative power in our land, a hidden energy through which the life which is consumed in us is perpetually restored, through which the powerful bodies are secretly formed, the large hearts, the luminous spirits, which will suddenly cast their light over us, whilst the instruments of our imperfect work are about to fall from our wearied hands. It is true, then, that our land is still so rich as to be able to nourish the germs of highest hope."

The faith which Giuseppe Mazzini expressed in this sentence, is ours: "We religiously believe that Italy has not exhausted her own life in the world. She is still called to contribute new elements to the progressive development of humanity and to live a third life. We ought to aim at initiating it."

And let us also recall the words of another most noble lover of liberty, who died blind, and yet seeing: "Every new thing is old; every old thing is new: the sole path of truth is to see the one in the other."

The rules to which our weakness is at present subject are false and consequently failing. The Italians will not seek new rules except in the study of their own nature, of their history, of their thought, of their incomparable successive civilizations; so that the nation may expand in the unknown future not only by means of its own new forces, but of that faith and purpose which animated it in all the past centuries.

There is neither health nor beauty to be found except in man's unfettered endeavor, all his energy at work and turned in the direction which the infallible genius of the race points out to him. Like that Carolingian knight, who inherited the strength of all the warriors overthrown by his lance, the man who deserves to live feels himself greater and stronger after every obstacle he overcomes.

Let us glorify the life which ascends higher and higher! Let us extol the truth that sets us free!

I. The more man endeavors to increase his true being, the more worthy is he.

II. The fate of Italy is inseparable from the destinies of Beauty, her daughter.

III. The Latin genius can never regain its hegemony in the world except on condition of re-establishing the worship of a single purpose, and of holding as sacred the sentiment which in the ancient Latium inspired the *Terminalia*.

Through faith in these truths Italy will still be the most noble of nations. Picture to yourself the appearance of her beautiful body, out of which so many harvests, so many men of art, so many heroes have sprung! She lies at the centre of the places where the grandest human civilizations flourished and still flourish. As a link, she connects the West to the East by that *mare nostrum*, that Mediterranean, which bore on its waters "the most beautiful thing in the world, the Greek genius, and the grandest, the Roman peace." The formidable masses of her Alps seem to enter into the heart of Europe, whilst the winds of Africa and Asia warm her southern coasts. Different races, gentle and rough, agile and vigorous, all meet here and multiply. Most powerful institutions, whose influence has been world-wide, formed themselves within her confines, and lived and still live on her soil. Moral dominion appears to be her destiny. The greatest errors may darken, but cannot destroy, her genius. No other land is in such perfect harmony as Italy with the moral and mental structure of her great men. All her strength and all her beauty appear always to tend towards a supreme human expression. There was an hour of her history in which the harmony between herself and her progeny appeared as marvellously perfect, so that her natural forces and the living works of her sons adjusted themselves to each other in an ineffable equilibrium. The hardness of her mountains, the flow of her rivers, the form of her valleys, could be recognized in the pulsations of her civil life.

If to-day this harmony is broken, shall we not be able to re-constitute it? Not we; but those who come after us. Not the men of to-morrow, perhaps, but those of a further future for sure.

Our own life must, then, be the worship of expectation.

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO.